

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Honoring National Small Business Week Award Winners

May 1, 2023

The President. Good morning, or after—good afternoon. [*Laughter*]

Sale of First Republic Bank to JPMorgan Chase

Before we start, I'm pleased to say that the regulators have taken action to facilitate the sale of First Republic Bank and ensure that all depositors are protected and that taxpayers are not on the hook. These actions are going to make sure that the banking system is safe and sound, and that includes protecting small businesses across the country who need to make payroll for workers and their small businesses.

And so let me be very clear: While depositors are being protected, shareholders are losing their investments. And critically, taxpayers are not the ones that are on the hook, as I said earlier.

But going forward, I've called on Congress to give regulators the tools to hold bank executives accountable. And I've called on regulators to strengthen regulations and supervision of large and regional banks.

And, folks, we have to make sure that we're not back in this position again, and I think we're well on our way to be able to make that assurance.

And as I said to my introducer, Jill, a moment ago, she's really impressive, isn't she? And the guy sitting next to her, if you disagree with me, it's her husband, and you're in deep trouble. [*Laughter*] Welcome, man. Speaking of small business, you've got your own small business. And I want to thank you.

Look, folks, we've got a lot to do. And the most immediate thing we can do is ensure the continued reliance of our economy and the financial system.

Public Debt Limit

The most important thing we have to do in that regard is to make sure the threat by the Speaker of the House to default on the national debt is off the table.

For over 200 years, America has never, ever, ever failed to pay its debt. To put in the capital—in colloquial terms, America is not a deadbeat nation. We have never, ever failed to meet the debt.

Now, as a result, we're one of the most respected nations in the world. We pay our bills, and we should do so without reckless hostage-taking from some of the MAGA Republicans in Congress.

National Small Business Week Awards

And, folks, now for the reason we're here: We're all here today because I want to thank Jill and all of you—and Jill was last year's winner, as you all know—for her introduction and for the hope your business gives so many families that so badly need it. They really do.

My daughter is a social worker, working with abused women in Philadelphia, and it's her passion. But there's so much we can do if we just have the wherewithal to reach out.

You know, thanks to Administrator Guzman for leading this historic effort to support small businesses all across America.

And I want to thank Vice President Harris, who's doing such an expanded entrepreneurship [in; White House correction] underserved communities throughout America, talking about what impact it has on those underserved communities.

And congratulations to the National Small Business Week Award winners. You're models of grit, heart, drive, and determination, all the virtues—and it's not hyperbole—that literally built America.

This week, we celebrate that same unstoppable spirit in every entrepreneur nationwide. Small businesses are the engine of our economy, the glue—they really are—the glue, the heart and soul of communities. And most citizens don't know it—is that you small-business owners, you account for 40 percent—let me say it again—40 percent of the gross domestic product of America. Small businesses. Not mega corporations. Small businesses.

You enjoy nearly half—employ nearly half of all private-sector workers. And that's—I don't think people know that. I don't think they understand the consequence—economic consequence. You're involved in and you're innovative across every single, solitary industry.

You know, we saw it here at the White House last month when I hosted the annual Women's Business Summit to celebrate the critical contributions that women entrepreneurs make to our economy. And we see it here again today in companies like—and I hope I pronounce it right—AmePower? Is it "Ame"?

Participant. Yes.

The President. I believe that's right, yes. AmePower, Florida's Small Business winner—award winner. Business Week winner. You won. [Laughter] But it's a big deal.

Founded by immigrants from Latin America, it designed high-power energy converters to help fuel our shift to a clean-energy future.

And we see it in businesses like Begin With [Within; White House correction] Therapy, the Illinois winner. Give her—let's clap for that one too. It started 8 years ago in one room in Chicago's South Side and now provides 20,000 mental health care appointments a year, helping change the community for the better.

Every business here has a story. And the Small Business Administration has helped tell those stories—your stories—and to grow your businesses. And it's one of the best investments—it's not hyperbole—one of the best investments America can make.

That's why supporting small business is at the heart of my plan to grow our economy from the middle out and the bottom up. You know, I came from a working class family, and not a whole lot trickled down. A trickle-down economy—not a whole lot dropped on my dad's kitchen table. And so we're building it from the middle out and the bottom up. And I really mean it.

When I took office, our economy was reeling. Small businesses were getting crushed. Hundreds of thousands of small—literally, hundreds of thousands of small businesses across America had been closed and closed forever. Millions more were hanging by a thread.

Many of you remember that fear of not only losing your livelihood, but losing your dream, your life's savings, your hopes of leaving something behind for your kids.

So we moved fast. Within weeks, we reformed the Paycheck Protection Program to get game-changing help to thousands of small businesses, some right here on this lawn, that had been shut out during the prior administration.

I signed the American Rescue Plan. In sum total, we delivered \$450 billion in relief to 6 million small businesses, including many of yours. And by the way, you generated, with your

business, more of that in revenue than you got help on—with. You pay your bills, you paid your workers, you kept your doors open. You grew the economy.

We gave additional support to 100,000 restaurants and 220,000 childcare centers, which so many working parents rely on. And imagine if we didn't do that, what the impact on the economy was. How many of those 220,000 women and men would be able to continue to work? And by the way, not a single Republican voted for that bill.

Next, I signed the bipartisan infrastructure law. How can we be the strongest nation in the world without the strongest infrastructure in the world? We're making intersections safer. We're making sure communities can connect the internet—to the internet affordably and reliably. Making sure the water you drink is safe, protecting one of the most important things we can do by eliminating lead pipes in America so you can assure that the 400,000 schools in America, when your kid turns on that faucet to take a drink, they're not getting sick.

Look, we're making a whole economy stronger for years to come. We passed the CHIPS and Science Act, one of the most significant investments ever—ever in American history—in manufacturing and research and development. We attracted over \$400 billion in less than 2 years in private-sector investment, creating tens of thousands of jobs now and in the future.

We're going to lead the world again in manufacturing and sale of semiconductors. We invented them. We made them smaller. We made them more technically capable. And we ended up at—because of the last 15 years, getting down to having only 10 percent of the market.

It's building the industries of the future and the small-businesses' supply chains to support them right here at home. I signed the Inflation Reduction Act, the most aggressive action to fight climate ever, anywhere in the world, creating new markets for small clean-energy companies.

Put all that together, and our plan is quite simple: Invest in America. You know, if I could hold a second here, you know, the fact is—[*applause*—I want to make something clear.

We're in a situation where, back in the thirties, there was a proposal that we could invest any money the President spent of taxpayers' money, he could insist to be made by American manufacturers and use American products. But not many people had the willingness to do it, but I changed that.

The fact is, we're making it in America, we're building it in America, and we're using American products, and we're using American work.

And that investment is being led by all of you here, America's small businesses. And it's led by—it's led to a small-business boom. Today, we're in the midst of the strongest economic recovery on record. In less than 2 years, we've created 12.6 million new jobs, more jobs in 2 years than any President has created in his first 4 years in office.

Unemployment is near a 50-percent [50-year; White house correction] low. Inflation is slowing down 40 percent since last year.

We have more to do. It's a historic turnaround, and it's giving people confidence to risk starting a new enterprise. And by the way, a record 10.5 million new business applications were filed in my first 2 years, the largest number ever on record in a 2-year period, and we're tracking it.

Every time someone starts a new business, you know what it is. It's an act of hope. It's an act of hope. It really matters. It's about who we are.

One year ago, I unveiled the administration's small-business strategy. Today we're releasing a report card on the progress we've made. Maybe I should say the progress you made—you made.

We've seen—we've set a record for Federal contracts spending—contracts spending on small businesses, making sure they benefit from the historic investment in America's infrastructure, industry, and the economy.

And we're working hard to expand access to capital to help promising businesses continue to grow. The Small Business Administration last year provided \$43 billion in low-cost loans to many of you here on this lawn and all across America.

I finalized new rules to expand credit to rural, minority-, women-, veterans-owned enterprises by working with nontraditional lenders, like nonprofits. And it invested \$10 billion in State-level small-business programs, drawing tens of billions more from private funding and small—for small companies.

We've made all this progress while—believe it or not, if you don't listen to the other team—by being fiscally responsible. Unlike the last guy, my first 2 years, we cut the deficit 1.7 billion dollars—trillion—trillion—trillion dollars—[*applause*]*—not billion, trillion dollars—in less than 2 years.*

And we're going to bring it down hundreds of billions more in the decades ahead by making the superwealthy and big corporations begin to pay their fair share, just their fair share. By the way, you know, we have about a thousand billionaires. You know what their average tax rate is? Eight—e-i-g-h-t—percent. [*Laughter*] Yes, that's what I think too. Eight percent. It's such a burden. Such burden on them.

And by the way, folks, how many of you think—it's a serious question. Press can participate if they want to too. How many of you think the tax system we have today is fair? Notice all the hands that went up. [*Laughter*] Folks, that's why we instituted a corporate minimum tax of 15 percent—15 percent. Hell, schoolteachers pay a hell of a lot more than 15 percent.

Look, now small business can finally start to compete on a level playing field.

And by the way, one of the reasons we were able to keep that debt down to \$1.7 trillion and reduce the debt was because all that we did—you paid—remember you'd hear—you got tired of hearing me speak in the last 2 years about the 550 American corporations that made a half a billion—forty—\$400 billion and didn't pay a penny in taxes.

Somehow, people thought, like me, that wasn't a fair thing to do. So we got change. We set a 15-percent tax. What a burden. It paid for everything, and now the other team wants to repeal it because they think it's unfair to them.

Folks, look, all of that is a sharp contrast to our friends on the other side. Last week, Speaker McCarthy passed a partisan bill that would claw back billions of dollars meant for small businesses. It would gut training and support, make it harder for veterans-owned businesses to win Federal contracts. Slash funding for the Small Business Administration's Inspector General, who fights fraud and abuse to keep this president on—this program on the level.

Their extreme MAGA plan would cut critical funding for education, public safety, including cut 60,000 public schoolteachers, take health care and food assistance away from millions of working families. Moody's suggested it would cost us 780,000 jobs lost if it passed—not me, Moody's. It would put the entire economy at risk by refusing to pay our Nation's bills.

Let me be clear: Our Nation's debt has taken over 200 years to accumulate. That's what we're paying. We're not paying for what we're spending right now. The 200 years—200 years of debt. And by the way, in the previous 4 years, the last guy increased the entirety of the national debt by 40 percent.

Threatening default now would be totally responsible—irresponsible. It would lead to higher interest rates, higher credit card rates; mortgage rates would skyrocket. Working people, the middle class, and seniors would pay the price.

Let me close with this. You've made so much progress in the last 2 years. Now it's time for us to finish the job. Expand opportunities so people with great ideas can launch strong businesses, help grow our economy, and leave no one behind.

That's what entrepreneurs here today do what you're doing and continue to do. You see possibilities to make this all real. You're the big reason why I've never been—and I mean this sincerely—I've never been more optimistic about our future than I am today.

We just have to remember who we are. I really mean it. Think about it. We are the United States of America. There is not a damn thing beyond our capacity if we do it together.

We have never, ever, ever failed when we've set a goal and done it together. So, folks, let's keep it going.

And God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill Scarbro-McLaury, director and owner, Bright Futures Learning Services; and former President Donald J. Trump.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : National Small Business Week Award winners.

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